

## **Senate Bill No. 826**

### **CHAPTER 568**

An act to amend Sections 138.6 and 138.7 of the Labor Code, relating to workers' compensation.

[Approved by Governor October 7, 2011. Filed with  
Secretary of State October 7, 2011.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SB 826, Leno. Workers' compensation: data reporting requirement: administrative penalties.

Existing law establishes a workers' compensation system, administered by the Administrative Director of the Division of Workers' Compensation, to compensate an employee for injuries sustained in the course of his or her employment. Existing law requires the administrative director to develop a cost-efficient workers' compensation information system and requires the administrative director to adopt regulations specifying the data elements to be collected by electronic data interchange.

Existing law establishes the Workers' Compensation Administration Revolving Fund in the State Treasury. Money in the fund may be expended by the Department of Industrial Relations, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the administration of the workers' compensation program, except as provided, and for the Return-to-Work Program.

This bill would require the administrative director to assess an administrative penalty against a claims administrator for a violation of data reporting requirements. This bill would require the administrative director to promulgate a schedule of penalties providing for an assessment of no more than \$5,000 against a claims administrator in any single year, calculated by violation type and excluding threshold rates of violations, as prescribed. This bill would provide that any penalty is to be deposited in the Workers' Compensation Administration Revolving Fund.

Existing law provides that a person who, or public or private entity that, is not a party to a claim for workers' compensation benefits may not obtain individually identifiable information, as defined, that is obtained or maintained by the division on that claim, except as specified.

This bill would require the administrative director to publish an annual report disclosing the compliance rates of claims administrators and would authorize the administrative director to publish the identity of claims administrators for this purpose.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares that the goal of this act is to encourage compliance with existing law.

SEC. 2. Section 138.6 of the Labor Code is amended to read:

138.6. (a) The administrative director, in consultation with the Insurance Commissioner and the Workers' Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau, shall develop a cost-efficient workers' compensation information system, which shall be administered by the division. The administrative director shall adopt regulations specifying the data elements to be collected by electronic data interchange.

(b) The information system shall do the following:

(1) Assist the department to manage the workers' compensation system in an effective and efficient manner.

(2) Facilitate the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery system.

(3) Assist in measuring how adequately the system indemnifies injured workers and their dependents.

(4) Provide statistical data for research into specific aspects of the workers' compensation program.

(c) The data collected electronically shall be compatible with the Electronic Data Interchange System of the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions. The administrative director may adopt regulations authorizing the use of other nationally recognized data transmission formats in addition to those set forth in the Electronic Data Interchange System for the transmission of data required pursuant to this section. The administrative director shall accept data transmissions in any authorized format. If the administrative director determines that any authorized data transmission format is not in general use by claims administrators, conflicts with the requirements of state or federal law, or is obsolete, the administrative director may adopt regulations eliminating that data transmission format from those authorized pursuant to this subdivision.

(d) (1) The administrative director shall assess an administrative penalty against a claims administrator for a violation of data reporting requirements adopted pursuant to this section. The administrative director shall promulgate a schedule of penalties providing for an assessment of no more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) against a claims administrator in any single year, calculated as follows:

(A) No more than one hundred dollars (\$100) multiplied by the number of violations in that year that resulted in a required data report not being submitted or not being accepted.

(B) No more than fifty dollars (\$50) multiplied by the number of violations in that year that resulted in a required report being late or accepted with an error.

(C) Multiple errors in a single report shall be counted as a single violation.

(D) No penalty shall be assessed pursuant to Section 129.5 for any violation of data reporting requirements for which a penalty has been or may be assessed pursuant to this section.

(2) The schedule promulgated by the administrative director pursuant to paragraph (1) shall establish threshold rates of violations that shall be excluded from the calculation of the assessment, as follows:

(A) The threshold rate for reports that are not submitted or are submitted but not accepted shall not be less than 3 percent of the number of reports that are required to be filed by or on behalf of the claims administrator.

(B) The threshold rate for reports that are accepted with an error shall not be less than 3 percent of the number of reports that are accepted with an error.

(C) The administrative director shall set higher threshold rates as appropriate in recognition of the fact that the data necessary for timely and accurate reporting may not be always available to a claims administrator or the claims administrator's agents.

(D) The administrative director may establish higher thresholds for particular data elements that commonly are not reasonably available.

(3) The administrative director may estimate the number of required data reports that are not submitted by comparing a statistically valid sample of data available to the administrative director from other sources with the data reported pursuant to this section.

(4) All penalties assessed pursuant to this section shall be deposited in the Workers' Compensation Administration Revolving Fund.

(5) The administrative director shall publish an annual report disclosing the compliance rates of claims administrators.

SEC. 3. Section 138.7 of the Labor Code, as amended by Section 1 of Chapter 611 of the Statutes of 2010, is amended to read:

138.7. (a) Except as expressly permitted in subdivision (b), a person or public or private entity not a party to a claim for workers' compensation benefits may not obtain individually identifiable information obtained or maintained by the division on that claim. For purposes of this section, "individually identifiable information" means any data concerning an injury or claim that is linked to a uniquely identifiable employee, employer, claims administrator, or any other person or entity.

(b) (1) (A) The administrative director, or a statistical agent designated by the administrative director, may use individually identifiable information for purposes of creating and maintaining the workers' compensation information system as specified in Section 138.6.

(B) The administrative director may publish the identity of claims administrators in the annual report disclosing the compliance rates of claims administrators pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 138.6.

(2) (A) The State Department of Public Health may use individually identifiable information for purposes of establishing and maintaining a program on occupational health and occupational disease prevention as specified in Section 105175 of the Health and Safety Code.

(B) (i) The State Department of Health Care Services may use individually identifiable information for purposes of seeking recovery of Medi-Cal costs incurred by the state for treatment provided to injured workers that should have been incurred by employers and insurance carriers pursuant to Article 3.5 (commencing with Section 14124.70) of Chapter 7 of Part 3 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(ii) The Department of Industrial Relations shall furnish individually identifiable information to the State Department of Health Care Services, and the State Department of Health Care Services may furnish the information to its designated agent, provided that the individually identifiable information shall not be disclosed for use other than the purposes described in clause (i). The administrative director may adopt regulations solely for the purpose of governing access by the State Department of Health Care Services or its designated agents to the individually identifiable information as defined in subdivision (a).

(3) (A) Individually identifiable information may be used by the Division of Workers' Compensation, the Division of Occupational Safety and Health, and the Division of Labor Statistics and Research as necessary to carry out their duties. The administrative director shall adopt regulations governing the access to the information described in this subdivision by these divisions. Any regulations adopted pursuant to this subdivision shall set forth the specific uses for which this information may be obtained.

(B) Individually identifiable information maintained in the workers' compensation information system and the Division of Workers' Compensation may be used by researchers employed by or under contract to the Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation as necessary to carry out the commission's research. The administrative director shall adopt regulations governing the access to the information described in this subdivision by commission researchers. These regulations shall set forth the specific uses for which this information may be obtained and include provisions guaranteeing the confidentiality of individually identifiable information. Individually identifiable information obtained under this subdivision shall not be disclosed to commission members. No individually identifiable information obtained by researchers under contract to the commission pursuant to this subparagraph may be disclosed to any other person or entity, public or private, for a use other than that research project for which the information was obtained. Within a reasonable period of time after the research for which the information was obtained has been completed, the data collected shall be modified in a manner so that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

(4) The administrative director shall adopt regulations allowing reasonable access to individually identifiable information by other persons or public or private entities for the purpose of bona fide statistical research. This research shall not divulge individually identifiable information concerning a particular employee, employer, claims administrator, or any other person or entity. The regulations adopted pursuant to this paragraph shall include

provisions guaranteeing the confidentiality of individually identifiable information. Within a reasonable period of time after the research for which the information was obtained has been completed, the data collected shall be modified in a manner so that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

(5) This section shall not operate to exempt from disclosure any information that is considered to be a public record pursuant to the California Public Records Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 6250) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code) contained in an individual's file once an application for adjudication has been filed pursuant to Section 5501.5.

However, individually identifiable information shall not be provided to any person or public or private entity who is not a party to the claim unless that person identifies himself or herself or that public or private entity identifies itself and states the reason for making the request. The administrative director may require the person or public or private entity making the request to produce information to verify that the name and address of the requester is valid and correct. If the purpose of the request is related to preemployment screening, the administrative director shall notify the person about whom the information is requested that the information was provided and shall include the following in 12-point type:

**"IT MAY BE A VIOLATION OF FEDERAL AND STATE LAW TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST A JOB APPLICANT BECAUSE THE APPLICANT HAS FILED A CLAIM FOR WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS."**

Any residence address is confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person or public or private entity except to a party to the claim, a law enforcement agency, an office of a district attorney, any person for a journalistic purpose, or other governmental agency.

Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to prohibit the use of individually identifiable information for purposes of identifying bona fide lien claimants.

(c) Except as provided in subdivision (b), individually identifiable information obtained by the division is privileged and is not subject to subpoena in a civil proceeding unless, after reasonable notice to the division and a hearing, a court determines that the public interest and the intent of this section will not be jeopardized by disclosure of the information. This section shall not operate to restrict access to information by any law enforcement agency or district attorney's office or to limit admissibility of that information in a criminal proceeding.

(d) It shall be unlawful for any person who has received individually identifiable information from the division pursuant to this section to provide that information to any person who is not entitled to it under this section.

(e) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2017, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2017, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 4. Section 138.7 of the Labor Code, as added by Section 2 of Chapter 611 of the Statutes of 2010, is amended to read:

138.7. (a) Except as expressly permitted in subdivision (b), a person or public or private entity not a party to a claim for workers' compensation benefits may not obtain individually identifiable information obtained or maintained by the division on that claim. For purposes of this section, "individually identifiable information" means any data concerning an injury or claim that is linked to a uniquely identifiable employee, employer, claims administrator, or any other person or entity.

(b) (1) (A) The administrative director, or a statistical agent designated by the administrative director, may use individually identifiable information for purposes of creating and maintaining the workers' compensation information system as specified in Section 138.6.

(B) The administrative director may publish the identity of claims administrators in the annual report disclosing the compliance rates of claims administrators pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 138.6.

(2) The State Department of Public Health may use individually identifiable information for purposes of establishing and maintaining a program on occupational health and occupational disease prevention as specified in Section 105175 of the Health and Safety Code.

(3) (A) Individually identifiable information may be used by the Division of Workers' Compensation, the Division of Occupational Safety and Health, and the Division of Labor Statistics and Research as necessary to carry out their duties. The administrative director shall adopt regulations governing the access to the information described in this subdivision by these divisions. Any regulations adopted pursuant to this subdivision shall set forth the specific uses for which this information may be obtained.

(B) Individually identifiable information maintained in the workers' compensation information system and the Division of Workers' Compensation may be used by researchers employed by or under contract to the Commission on Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation as necessary to carry out the commission's research. The administrative director shall adopt regulations governing the access to the information described in this subdivision by commission researchers. These regulations shall set forth the specific uses for which this information may be obtained and include provisions guaranteeing the confidentiality of individually identifiable information. Individually identifiable information obtained under this subdivision shall not be disclosed to commission members. No individually identifiable information obtained by researchers under contract to the commission pursuant to this subparagraph may be disclosed to any other person or entity, public or private, for a use other than that research project for which the information was obtained. Within a reasonable period of time after the research for which the information was obtained has been completed, the data collected shall be modified in a manner so that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

(4) The administrative director shall adopt regulations allowing reasonable access to individually identifiable information by other persons or public or private entities for the purpose of bona fide statistical research. This research shall not divulge individually identifiable information concerning a particular employee, employer, claims administrator, or any other person or entity. The regulations adopted pursuant to this paragraph shall include provisions guaranteeing the confidentiality of individually identifiable information. Within a reasonable period of time after the research for which the information was obtained has been completed, the data collected shall be modified in a manner so that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

(5) This section shall not operate to exempt from disclosure any information that is considered to be a public record pursuant to the California Public Records Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 6250) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code) contained in an individual's file once an application for adjudication has been filed pursuant to Section 5501.5.

However, individually identifiable information shall not be provided to any person or public or private entity who is not a party to the claim unless that person identifies himself or herself or that public or private entity identifies itself and states the reason for making the request. The administrative director may require the person or public or private entity making the request to produce information to verify that the name and address of the requester is valid and correct. If the purpose of the request is related to preemployment screening, the administrative director shall notify the person about whom the information is requested that the information was provided and shall include the following in 12-point type:

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Any residence address is confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person or public or private entity except to a party to the claim, a law enforcement agency, an office of a district attorney, any person for a journalistic purpose, or other governmental agency.

Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to prohibit the use of individually identifiable information for purposes of identifying bona fide lien claimants.

(c) Except as provided in subdivision (b), individually identifiable information obtained by the division is privileged and is not subject to subpoena in a civil proceeding unless, after reasonable notice to the division and a hearing, a court determines that the public interest and the intent of this section will not be jeopardized by disclosure of the information. This section shall not operate to restrict access to information by any law enforcement agency or district attorney's office or to limit admissibility of that information in a criminal proceeding.

- (d) It shall be unlawful for any person who has received individually identifiable information from the division pursuant to this section to provide that information to any person who is not entitled to it under this section.
- (e) This section shall become operative on January 1, 2017.

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